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'I BELIEVE THAT MY EXPERIENCE BEGAN IN THE WOMB AND WAS LATER ABSORBED THROUGH MY MOTHER'S MILK': SECOND GENERATION TRAUMA NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

This contribution analyses texts written by the descendants of Holocaust survivors and former refugees who have contributed to the newsletter of the Second Generation Network based in Britain. Examination of this material demonstrates how these postmemory trauma narratives add to our understanding of Holocaust and Refugee Studies. The ongoing impact of the Holocaust on subsequent generations descended from survivors and refugees suggests that it should be considered an integral part of British history that continues to reverberate in twenty-first century society in the UK.

Dieser Beitrag analysiert die Texte von Nachfahren Holocaust-Überlebender und ehemaliger Flüchtlinge, die diese für den Nachrichtenbrief des Second Generation Network schrieben. Das Material zeigt, wie eine Untersuchung dieser Postmemory Trauma-Narrative zu unserem Verständnis des Holocaust und der Flüchtlingsgeschichte beiträgt. Die anhaltende Auswirkung des Holocaust auf die Kinder und Enkel von Überlebenden und ehemaligen Flüchtlingen macht deutlich, dass das Ereignis ein wesentlicher Teil der Geschichte Großbritanniens ist und nachhaltige Konsequenzen für die britische Gesellschaft des 21. Jahrhunderts hat.

In the twenty-first century, remembering the Holocaust is part of British public life. Holocaust Memorial Day was established in 2001, the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission report entitled 'Britain's Promise to Remember' was published in 2015, and in October 2017 the winning design for the new UK Holocaust Memorial near the Houses of Parliament was revealed to the public. Largely, these efforts to remember the Holocaust involved people of all ages who have had no direct experience of the Holocaust themselves, as is also the case with their relatives. However, as Britain was home to more than 70,000 refugees from Central Europe at the beginning of the Second World War and also took in a number of concentration camp survivors and displaced persons after 1945, there is a sizeable number of families in which remembering the Holocaust is a much more personal matter. Here we will explore these memories through texts written by the children and grandchildren of these survivors and former refugees, paying special attention to the descendants of those who came to the UK on the Kindertransport. We will investigate texts from the publication *Second Generation Voices*, the newsletter of the Second

Generation Network,[1] as cultural narratives re-imagining Holocaust trauma and as examples of 'postmemory', a term coined by the American scholar Marianne Hirsch. We will show how these trauma narratives add to our understanding of the Holocaust as an event which resonates in British history and continues directly to affect UK society today.

2018 has seen an intensification of commemorative activity regarding the Kindertransport, the first train having arrived in Britain just eighty years ago.[2] Amongst different groups of survivors and refugees in the UK in the twenty-first century, the group of those who came here on the Kindertransport is prominent among the dwindling numbers of former refugees and Holocaust survivors who are still alive. This is partially attributable to their young age in the late 1930s, and partly due to the fact that their group is well organised. Although the British government could perhaps be described as playing a rather reluctant part in the effort to give refuge to adults fleeing National Socialism and in the Kindertransport rescue,[3] after 1945 it decided to offer naturalisation to almost all refugees who had spent the war in the UK. Most of those rescued on the Kindertransport who had reached the age of majority by then became naturalised, and stayed in the UK.[4]

However, it is the Kindertransport reunion movement (Reunion of the Kindertransporte, ROK) that can largely be credited with raising the profile of the Kindertransport in Britain and even abroad. The first Kindertransport Reunion took place in London in June 1989. Some former Kindertransportees, especially those who had been very young when they escaped, only realised through these first reunion meetings and the public attention that surrounded them, that they had been part of a large refugee group. Some had very limited memories of their own early life. One of the rescued children, Ruth Barnett, confirms this in *Second Generation Voices*: 'I only discovered this interest in myself in 1989 when Berta Leverton organised the first Reunion of Kindertransporte. Up until then the word Kindertransport had not entered my vocabulary and I was shocked to

[1] See http://secondgeneration.org.uk/wp/ (accessed 12 January 2018).

[2] For a summary of commemorations in Germany and Britain, see Anna Kögel, 'Züge in den Tod. Züge in ein Leben ohne Eltern', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18 November 2018, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/gedenken-an-die-opfer-des-nationalsozialismus-zuege-in-den-tod-zuege-in-ein-leben-ohne-eltern/23634300.html (accessed 22 November 2018).

[3] See Andrea Hammel, '"I remember their labels round their necks": Britain and the Kindertransport', in *The Palgrave Handbook to Britain and the Holocaust*, ed. Tom Lawson and Andy Pearce, Basingstoke 2020 (forthcoming).

[4] The US and Israel were the most common destinies for further migration. Today there are Kindertransport Associations in both countries. For the North American Kindertransport Association (KTA), see http://kindertransport.org/ (accessed 18 January 2018); for an article on Kindertransportees in Israel, see 'Special Gathering of Kindertransport Children at Yad Vashem', https://www.yadvashem.org/events/27-february-2012.html (accessed 20 July 2019).

discover that there were nearly 10,000 of us brought to England in 1938/39'.[5]

By this time, even the youngest of the former Kindertransportees were in their mid-fifties and many had children and grandchildren of their own. Some of these from the Second Generation had attended reunions with their parents, a practice that would become increasingly common as the former Kindertransportees aged. In 2013, the original Kindertransportees were said to be in the minority at the commemorative meeting, with the rest of those attending mainly made up from the Second and Third Generation. So far, there has been limited scholarly interest in the descendants of former Kindertransportees or in the descendants of Holocaust survivors and other former refugees in the UK, although they are – as is the case with the children of Kindertransportees – increasingly prominent in public discussions on Britain and the Holocaust.

US scholarship started to examine the phenomenon of children of Holocaust survivors and former refugees earlier than the UK. In the introduction to *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*,[6] Marianne Hirsch outlines her own intellectual development which ultimately led to her developing her influential theory of postmemory, which is relevant to this discussion. Originating in the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, Hirsch argues that memory started serving as a form of counterhistory, exposing power structures and exploring the forgetting and erasure of certain events and developments rather than offering grand narratives. Hirsch also describes how a relative of hers and her friends, all Holocaust survivors, started talking about their past, which they had not done before, after watching the US television series *Shoah* in 1987: '*Shoah* authorized their acts of witness.'[7] In Britain Anne Karpf identified the year 1996 as the point at which the attention of the British public shifted from focusing largely on Britain's role in winning the Second World War to looking at the causes and consequences of the Holocaust as well.[8] For former Kindertransportees, the Kindertransport Reunion movement seems to have had a similar effect, and the increasing public acknowledgement and establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK has clearly 'authorised' Holocaust testimony in the UK. As *Second Generation Voices* was first published in 1996, it can be argued that the same events furthered their narratives of witness to the Second Generation experiences. Hirsch's concept of postmemory was also developed at this time: in the 1990s Hirsch started to use the term to describe the relationship that the Second Generation

[5] Ruth Barnett, 'Breaking the Silence: Mending the Broken Connection Part 2', *Second Generation Voices*, January 2002, 12.

[6] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*, New York 2012.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[8] Anne Karpf, *The War After: Living with the Holocaust*, London 1996, p. 289.

developed to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of the First Generation. This Second Generation 'remembers' Holocaust trauma by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. Hirsch argues that these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right, rather than narratives told to them. The connection of postmemory to the past is thus actually mediated not only by recall, but also by imaginative investment and creation. This can be seen in many of the texts in *Second Generation Voices*. The UK descendants of Holocaust survivors and refugees grew up with overwhelming inherited memories. This can be problematic for a number of reasons, because having their lives dominated by narratives that preceded their birth or consciousness is to risk having their own life stories displaced by those of their ancestors. Again, this is a topic frequently discussed in *Second Generation Voices*. The other problem, also discussed there, is that this postmemory is shaped by traumatic fragments of events that are difficult to reconstruct or comprehend while their effects continue into the present.

The development of the first Holocaust Second Generation groups started in the USA. According to Alan and Naomi Berger, 'The Jewish Second Generation emerged as a distinct group in the mid-seventies, and gathered momentum in the eighties and early nineties'.[9] For those involved with Second Generation groups or publications it is apparent that there is such a thing as a Second and (Third) Generation experience and identity. The essence of this experience is the fact that the children of survivors had to live with the trauma of the Holocaust without ever having been alive during the time of the Holocaust. At the same time, some members of the Second Generation report that their parents were unable or unwilling to speak about their experience to the children:

> For this generation, the Holocaust means the *eternal presence of an absence*, that is, those who were murdered in the Shoah. The legacy of the Holocaust is present in a variety of ways for the Second Generation, issues of intergenerational communication, parental enmeshment and separation concerns.[10]

One of the special generational aspects of the Kindertransport is the fact that some of the trauma of the First Generation often relates to the parent–child relationship. Because of the fact that about half of all Kindertransportees lost their parents to the Holocaust and the fact that even for those who did meet their parents again, the parent–child relationship was irretrievably changed by the events of the Holocaust, the trauma of the Kindertransportees is located in this relationship and this

[9] Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger (eds), *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators*, Syracuse, NY 2001, p. 3.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

in turn affected their own parenting. The psychologist Gaby Glassman, who specialised in working with Second Generation survivors and refugees, explained the challenges experienced by individual members of these groups:

> When very young children wanted unconditional love from their parents, parents were not always able to give it. I have heard some Second Generation say, 'My mother doesn't do love.' Our generation seems to be much more aware of the importance of receiving unconditional love. [...] Separation issues were common. Children often found it hard to express their own feelings and to think and act independent. Consequently, some children skipped adolescence altogether while others went through 'adolescence' at a later time than usual, often only after they started therapy.[11]

While many members of the Second Generation were glad to be accepted as such and were happy to develop spaces where they could express themselves, others felt conflicted about joining such groups. Menachem Rosensaft, who was elected the first Chair of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in September 1981,[12] reports that he was initially not sure whether he wanted to join any Second Generation group, but when he heard how others defined their experience he decided that the Second Generation needed to organise and present and represent itself:

> I changed my mind in the Fall of 1979 at a New York Conference on Children of Holocaust Survivors. Organized by a well-meaning Jewish organization, this conference featured psychologist after psychologist after psychiatrist after psychiatrist after an array of other mental health specialists who considered themselves authorities on survivors and their children. In turn each of them publicly dissected our supposed pathology, trauma, guilt complexes [...] I was appalled. I did not recognise myself or any of my friends in the collective psychobabble to which we were subjected.[13]

In some cases, children of Holocaust survivors had initially been considered by some as 'replacement children'[14] and pathologised; however, it soon became apparent that the children of Holocaust survivors were a very heterogeneous group and that it was problematic to deduce general trends of mental wellbeing from those members of the Second Generation who

[11] Gaby Glassmann in an interview with Leonie Grayeff, 'Establishing a Separate Identity', *Second Generation Voices*, October 2012, 12–14.
[12] Menachem Z. Rosensaft, 'I was born in Bergen-Belsen', in Berger and Berger (eds), *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators* (note 9), pp. 188–207 (p. 202).
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 201.
[14] Alan L. Berger, *Children of Job. American Second-Generation Witnesses to the Holocaust*, New York 1997, p. 13.

had entered treatment for mental health conditions and to use such cases to generalise about the wider Second Generation group.

The transgenerational transmission of trauma became an established concept in the 1990s, but the focus switched towards how families worked:

> Families provide the socialization of children. Children learn values, beliefs and attitudes through direct teaching or indirect observation. The results of the present day study strongly support the transgenerational transmission of depression, guilt and shame from Holocaust survivors to Second Generation and their children (third generation).[15]

Most recently, a number of studies were published arguing that there is no increased occurrence of depression and other associated problems among the children of Holocaust survivors.[16]

Nevertheless, it is clear that descendants of survivors and refugees felt the need to join up with others from similar backgrounds.[17] The first issue of *Second Generation Voice* was published in January 1996 for 'children of Jewish Holocaust survivors and refugees', following on from a Second Generation Conference in Summer 1995. The editors state the publication's intentions:

> With Second Generation Voice we aim:
> – to provide a forum for discussion of topics of interest to the Second Generation
> – to provide the Second Generation with information on organisations, events and projects of interest to them
> – to foster contacts between members of the Second Generation, especially outside London and where contacts are less developed
> – to encourage the formation of a national body for the Second Generation.[18]

The first volume contains statements by children of survivors and refugees in which they outline how and why they had been affected by their parents' experiences. This format continues to this day. An early contribution by Susan Budnik, entitled 'The experience that began in the womb', is one of

[15] Susan Weisz Jurkowitz, 'Transgenerational Transmission of Depression, Shame and Guilt in Holocaust Families: An Examination of Three Generations', unpublished PhD thesis, California School of Professional Psychology, Los Angeles 1996, p. 196.

[16] For example, Lotem Giladi and Terece S. Bell, 'Protective Factors for Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma Among Second and Third Generation Holocaust Survivors', in *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Practice and Policy*, 5/4 (2013), 384–91; Ayala Fridman, Marian J. Bakermans-Kranenburg, Abraham Sagi-Schwartz and Marinus H. van IJzendoorn, 'Coping in old age with extreme childhood trauma: Aging Holocaust survivors and their offspring facing new challenges', *Aging & Mental Health*, 15/2 (2011), 232–42.

[17] In Britain the Second Generation was mainly organised in the Second Generation Trust, the Second Generation Network, which publishes *Second Generation Voice(s)*, and in therapy groups.

[18] Editorial, *Second Generation Voice*, January 1996, 1. 'Voice' was subsequently replaced by 'Voice(s)' or 'Voices' in the title.

the most memorable pieces in its radical portrayal of Second Generation experience:

> I believe that my experience began in the womb and was later absorbed through my mother's milk. The Holocaust experience passed down in diluted form to my innocent lips and through me to my children. If I still feel that everything can be taken from me at any time, isn't it likely that my children feel it too? When my nine-year-old daughter plays alone in the private seclusion of our garden and she suddenly disappears from sight, my heart sinks with irrational fear and I shriek her name 'till I hear her reassuring voice asking what is wrong. I am certain that my extreme reaction to such a normal occurrence has its roots in being the daughter of survivors. [...]
>
> Both my parents were deported from ghettos in Hungary and transported in cattle wagons to Auschwitz. My mother (18 years old) lost her parents, a brother and many close relations. My father (33 years old), who died fourteen years ago, lost a pregnant wife, four young children, parents, brothers, sisters and many relatives. They were all sent to the crematorium.[19]

Budnik's narrative describes an embodiment of Holocaust experience rather than a mere recalling of what her parents told her about their experience. Marianne Hirsch argues that the emergence of memory as counterhistory originated from liberation movements such as second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. Budnik's postmemory narrative is reminiscent of aspects of *écriture féminine*, a concept of women's writing that came to prominence among French feminist thinkers in the 1970s. Hélène Cixous wrote in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' that women write in 'mother's milk': 'She writes in white ink.'[20] Budnik feels that the Holocaust experience was similarly remembered through bodily transmission rather than through intellectual remembering. It is clear that Budnik was influenced by similar ideas. Creating a postmemory narrative, she not only remembers what she has been told about the experiences of her parents, but also explores events before her birth and before her conscious remembering. Budnik creates a counterhistory, exposing the problematic power of authenticity, and explores the forgetting of her Second Generation experience. She does so by juxtaposing the 'womb', 'mother's milk', and her 'innocent lips' with the 'cattle wagons to Auschwitz' and the list of relatives who were murdered, thus juxtaposing birth, childhood, and innocence with the mass murder of the Holocaust. The fact that her father lost a pregnant wife and four young children makes Budnik's choice of 'womb' and 'mother's milk' especially poignant. Budnik lost close blood-relatives, siblings, to the Holocaust. The article in *Second Generation Voices* is accompanied by two photographs, placed prominently,

[19] Susan Budnik, 'The Experience that began in the Womb', *Second Generation Voice*, January 1996, 6.
[20] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', tr. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1/4 (1976), 875–93 (881).

but without captions. One depicts three young children in summer clothes smiling into the camera, and the other photograph depicts a man, in the traditional attire of an Orthodox Jew, holding a small blonde child. Not until one is half-way through reading the article, does it become clear whether the children in the photographs are in fact Budnik and her siblings and their father post-war, or her father and his murdered first family in the late 1930s or early 1940s. In the article Budnik explains that the photographs show her murdered siblings and that her mother used them to explain her father's traumatic family history to Budnik and her later siblings. This powerful ambiguity is another aspect of the postmemory trauma narrative. The reader's experience of this ambiguity and his or her journey of discovery provides a glimpse into the Second Generation experience of Budnik and her siblings, who had to learn while growing up in the post-war era that their father had had a previous family and that they had had half-siblings who were murdered in the Holocaust.

Marianne Hirsch has written at length about photographic representations of families, and the deception and the power behind photographic representations, in her earlier book *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*.[21] Using numerous examples, she shows how family photos are used to work through traumatic dislocations in the post-Holocaust world. In the case of Budnik's article, the two family photographs represent the disconnection as well as the connection between the memory of the living and the murdered relatives. By not adding captions and thus not making it clear on first sight who the family members in the pictures are, Budnik conveys the ambiguity of dislocation.

Surveying the texts published in the newsletter *Second Generation Voices*, it is clear that not all members and correspondents would formulate a similar narrative of embodiment of the Holocaust experience in their texts. Most narrate a journey of self-discovery that is often a description of an actual journey to places outside the UK:

> Why are there flourishing Second Generation groups worldwide? [...] a recent survey of Second Generation Voices readers revealed that articles about 'journeys of self-discovery', that is, personal histories, are the most popular. Writers often describe actual journeys to the places their parent(s) grew up, and where other relatives perished.[22]

In one of the first issues of *Second Generation Voices*, immediately following Budnik's article, an article entitled 'Search for Identity' was published. Here, Barbara Dorrity, the daughter of a Kindertransportee, outlines how she always felt different from other children as she grew up:

[21] Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*, Cambridge, MA 1997.
[22] Barbara Dorrity, Letter, *Second Generation Voices*, September 1998, 25.

> I assume that, in common with many of our readers, I am involved in the process of trying to make sense of my family history, and my own identity. At a time, when some feel that a sense of national identity is so important, that it should be taught in schools, I am not convinced that I want and need a 'national identity'. Having always been acutely aware of being different from other children at school, because my parents were not born in England, I suppose I have only ever felt partially British, whatever 'feeling British' means.[23]

Dorrity's father, Rolf Dresner, fled to the UK on a Kindertransport from Leipzig and arrived in the UK at age thirteen on 27 June 1939. His parents were trapped in Poland, the father was shot by the Gestapo in Cracow in 1941, Dresner's mother was murdered in Belzec.

One of the specific problems for the children of Kindertransportees was to overcome the implicit hierarchy of suffering regarding different Holocaust experiences. Those who were rescued on the Kindertransport were often deemed to have suffered the least. Doris Bader Whiteman ironically terms the perception of those who had escaped National Socialist persecution before the 1940s as 'those to whom "nothing happened at all"'.[24] If these attitudes were carried to their logical conclusion, the children of Kindertransportees might be seen by some as a group that was so far removed from the experience that it should not consider itself affected. This perception is often not that of outsiders but is the self-perception of the Second Generation themselves. Compared to survivors who lived through the horror of a concentration camp, refugees often feel that it is difficult to talk about their suffering. In many cases refugees feel they do not want to call themselves Holocaust survivors. Thus, the children of former Kindertransportees sometimes feel the need to justify their inclusion in a Second Generation Holocaust experience. However, as Dorrity's description of her family's background shows, it is a complicated issue because Holocaust and refugee experiences are almost always intertwined in a single family.

It is clearly impossible to generalise every individual's reaction to their specific experiences. Some former Kindertransportees feel they were unaffected by the experience: 'a man who arrived on a *Kindertransport* to England in 1938 stated that he was lucky to be reunited later on with his parents. They had fled to Shanghai and come to England after the war. He said he felt "neutral, untraumatised".'[25] Soon after the founding of the newsletter the editorial committee of the Second Generation publication recognised the varied experiences and the different opinions. By September 1996 *Second Generation Voice* had become *Second Generation Voices*: 'Names are important to us. The name of our newsletter has been

[23] Barbara Dorrity, 'Search for Identity', *Second Generation Voice*, January 1996, 7.
[24] Doris Bader Whiteman, *The Uprooted: A Hitler Legacy*, New York and London 1993, p. 2.
[25] Anon., Letter, *Second Generation Voices*, October 2004, 17.

changed – expanded if not altered, according to the original intention of the founding editorial group. Henceforth the newsletter is to be called Second Generation Voices. It is a minor but salutary correction.'[26] The newsletter encouraged the Second and Third Generation to present their positions and identities in autobiographical narratives, poems, reports of events, photos, and art work, thus it is a rich source for postmemory trauma narratives in different forms. The difficulty of formulating such narratives is repeatedly discussed:

> Too many voices have been too silent for too long in respect of Second (and First) Generation Experiences. While respecting these silences, we feel they may also be probed, opened up and spoken of if a receptive ear (or form) is available for them. We hope you may feel closer to responding with your own voices to these views.[27]

As in the case of the US Second Generation survivor groups there was the 'presence of an absence'. In *Second Generation Voices* Ruth Selwyn writes:

> The atmosphere of silence surrounding the Holocaust created a very particular environment for the Second Generation. Group members often describe having been aware of pain, grief, sadness in their homes. In that sense they were 'born' into the Holocaust. However there was nothing clear they could get hold of. A fear of triggering a parent's overwhelming pain prevented many children from asking about their parents' Holocaust past.[28]

But it was not always the parents' unwillingness to talk about painful experiences that inhibited the children. Because of their young age when they lived through Holocaust-related trauma and the separation from their parents, some of the First Generation Kindertransportees had unclear memories of their own experiences. The psychotherapist and transportee Ruth Barnett writes about this in an article entitled 'Breaking the Silence: Mending the Broken Connection' in *Second Generation Voices*: 'That reunion made me realise not only that I knew very little but that I must have been shutting out, or relegating to the back corners of my mind, an awful lot of knowledge that was available to me.'[29] Other members of the Second Generation made similar observations and they describe an atmosphere where things were generally understood between the two generations although they were not explicitly articulated. Karen Goodman, a social worker and the daughter of a Kindertransportee from Czechoslovakia,

[26] Editorial, *Second Generation Voices*, September 1996, 1.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] Ruth Selwyn, 'Working with the Second Generation', *Second Generation Voices*, January 1998, 4.
[29] Ruth Barnett, 'Breaking the Silence: Mending the Broken Connection', *Second Generation Voices*, May 1998, 12.

writes about the communication with her mother on the occasion of the Winton Train Memorial event in 2009:[30]

> Our journey 70 years later was full of fun and tears, markedly more comfortable than for the original passengers. As my mother so poignantly remarked when I explained what I was doing: 'Hmm we sat on wooden benches, the trains were sealed, we were not allowed off the train. We only had what we brought with us to eat and drink...' The remainder of the realities, as ever, were unsaid but fully understood. (like most of the untold stories and truths about her history had been throughout my childhood). [...] I am one of the 5,000 descendants of the people whose lives were saved by the Winton trains.[31]

Going on an actual journey to places where members of the First Generation had lived or to which they had a meaningful connection, is a widespread trope in *Second Generation Voices*. The inner journey that Barbara Dorrity mentions in her articles is supplemented by a physical journey abroad. The narrative representation of such journeys is also often accompanied by photographs. In the case of Margaret Arenias, the destination was a house in the north east of Germany that used to belong to her family, the Weil family. As her father is already dead, she is the one who gains possession of the house, and although she has never lived in it, the house seems full of memories:

> It is as if time has stood still for 52 years and my mind is back in 1941 when it all happened. What will my feelings be when I enter the house again? [She had visited before.] I would like to take my sons to the house as I feel that they should experience it too. My eldest son is now in Jerusalem and has no wish to step on German soil, he is training to be an Orthodox rabbi. My youngest son is at present travelling the East, currently North India, and shows no sign of returning home yet. It feels as if I am alone, and that I cannot share these experiences with my children. I cannot run away. I must face the Holocaust, and experience the pain and anguish of my parents and my grandparents. Will the pain stop with me or will it carry on to future generations? I do not want the suffering to continue, but I do want my grandparents to be remembered, along with the six million that perished with them. What can I do now to keep their names alive?[32]

This contribution exemplifies the tension between keeping memory alive and continuing a never-ending spiral of suffering. The author writes, 'my mind is back in 1941 when it all happened', conjuring up a sense of immediacy for the reader although she herself was never present in

[30] 'WWII rescue trip recreated', 4 September 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8238104.stm (accessed 30/11/2018).
[31] Karen Goodman, 'The Winton Train 2009', in *Second Generation Voices*, October 2010, 15.
[32] Margaret Arenias, 'Reflections and Thought Following the Second Generation Group', *Second Generation Voices*, September 1996, 12.

1941. She also wants her sons to visit, while making quite clear that they have taken different 'journeys' in the literal and figurative sense. This contribution is accompanied by a photograph of the house, and again there is no caption. Again, there is an ambiguity for the reader as to whether this depicts the house in 1941 or in the 1990s.

The subject of continuing to suffer by remembering traumatic aspects of family history is often discussed in *Second Generation Voices*. A letter to the editor outlines this feeling:

> There are other things I don't care for quite as much. First and foremost there is an overall impression that the Second Generation contributors all seem to have taken the mantle of suffering from their First Generation ancestors. There is a lot of looking backwards and grieving. I personally find this very difficult to deal with on several fronts. Yes, to shape what we are and will be, we have to understand where we come from; but the past is the foundation of the future – where is the mention of the third generation? I think if the Second Generation invested time into the Third Generation, instead of 'Oi Vehing' about the first generation, their experiences and how they affect us, it would be a positive and healthy approach. [...] Let the hangups of the past rest. I believe that you honour the dead by living positively.[33]

Caring about the future and about how to transfer the lessons learnt from the Holocaust or the refugee experience of their parents are important recurring themes and demands in the newsletter. Overall, it cannot be said that the Second Generation as represented in *Second Generation Voices* is too inward-looking. There are numerous articles calling for assistance and solidarity with present-day refugee groups and for education campaigns to be set up. For example, members of the Second Generation of the Kindertransport were involved in an education resource, *The Last Goodbye*, aimed at teaching British schoolchildren about the Kindertransport, which was developed by The Jewish Museum London and the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR).[34] A group of social workers also developed an educational pack to help others in the caring profession to understand older survivors and former refugees and their specific needs. The newsletter contains debates about conflict in Israel and about the British government's attitude to present-day refugees and asylum seekers. Reviewing a Kindertransport Reunion publication entitled *Kindertransport – 60th Anniversary*, Jenny Alexander writes:

> Despite my interest in the book, in my opinion, its principal weakness lies in its inability to move on, or to offer more than many similar texts have in the past. It does not address the present, and probably in its defence never had any intention of doing so. It seems to me that, whilst this is enough

[33] Anon., 'Letter from Derbyshire', *Second Generation Voices*, May 1998, 3.
[34] Network News, *Second Generation Voices*, September 2003, 2.

> for the Kinder generation, it is important for those in the second and third generation to see beyond the memories of their parents.[35]

In a feature entitled 'Network News', the tensions between looking at their own experiences and sharing these with others and the need to work with others outside the Holocaust survivors' and refugee circles are discussed frequently:

> The committee is now reviewing our aims and objectives to reflect on our experiences. Much of our efforts so far have turned inwards, reflecting on individual, family and communal experiences. It may now be the time to look outwards as well, sharing our stories and making connections with other groups – this may in turn shed new light on our own experiences.[36]

The sixteen-year-old grandson of a survivor, Jacob Engelberg, makes the obvious connection to today's situation: 'I left the seminar in awe of the rescue operation and all who partook in it, and grateful that my grandfather was one of the lucky few. I also left with the message that those fleeing from authoritarian regimes and genocide should be given every right to asylum.'[37] Others criticise reunion meetings for a lack of contemporary relevance. Anne Overton writes about the reunions which took place in November and December 2008:

> I was sorry that the day's programme did not make a link with people from other ethnic groups whose lives are currently threatened by oppression. [...] My experience as a Second Generation member of a Holocaust refugee family has been mostly one of being on the edge of majority culture, of having a history that is on the margins of the mainstream. At the reunion we were not at the edge but at the centre of a story that is still in the making. For me, the reunion played a part in the shaping and re-shaping of the narrative that binds the refugee and the host country, and the past with the present and the emerging future.[38]

Currently many Holocaust-education organisations are struggling with the question of what shape their future programmes will take when no First Generation survivors and refugees will still be alive. The National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Nottinghamshire is trying to find a technological solution with their Forever Project, which 'uses advanced digital technologies that enable children and adults not only to hear and see a survivor sharing his or her story, but also allow them to ask that survivor questions and hear them giving answers to hundreds of frequently asked questions.'[39] The current British government has decided to erect a

[35] Jenny Alexander, Letter, *Second Generation Voices*, May 2003, 20.
[36] Editorial, *Second Generation Voices*, September 2003, 2.
[37] Jacob Engelberg, 'My Grandfather's Plight', *Second Generation Voices*, September 2003, 5.
[38] Anne Overton, 'Kindertransport reunion', *Second Generation Voices*, January 2009, 18.
[39] See https://www.holocaust.org.uk/ (accessed 20 July 2019).

large public memorial, and the Association of Jewish Refugees is continuing with its Refugee Voices project, an audio-visual testimony archive which is being added to currently. Members of the Second and Third Generation are still publishing stories of self-discovery in their newsletter. There are advantages and disadvantages to all these approaches. Publishing the postmemory narratives of the descendants of Holocaust survivors and refugees more widely is another possibility. As most people identify with the complexity of family relationships, they will be able to understand aspects of postmemory trauma narratives published in *Second Generation Voices*. And as most members of the Second Generation living in the UK are UK citizens, it should bring these Holocaust trauma narratives closer to home. The Holocaust did not happen in the UK, but its consequences reverberate across the UK in a more immediate fashion than many care to admit. In January 2017 Peter Skyte wrote in *Second Generation Voices*:

> In present times as in the past, it is all too easy to blame the ills of society on 'the other', to scapegoat a group that looks, sounds, or can be portrayed as 'different'. [...] Our identity is defined as much by the past as by the present. [...] As such memory plays a key role in identity, in order that we can understand who we are. [...] in my early years, belonging to a minority rather than a majority was something I struggled to come to terms with. [...] It is only with the maturity of adulthood, when that arrived, that I began to see my roots as a strength rather than a weakness. Being 50% Prussian, 50% Bavarian and 100% Yorkshireman in my composition adds up to more than a whole, and makes me unique.[40]

Most contributors to *Second Generation Voices* are very analytical about contemporary British society, their Continental European roots, and many write illuminating postmemory trauma narratives.

It is often stated by Holocaust educators that lessons about tolerance can be learnt by anyone studying the subject. For educators and students in a country like Britain this can be seen as a more abstract activity than, for example, for educators and students in Germany. But due to the fact that a sizeable number of Holocaust survivors and former refugees settled in the UK and that their descendants are proactively examining their family backgrounds and the trauma experienced by themselves, by their parents, and by their grandparents, a more direct link clearly exists. Learning from the descendants that the after-effects of the Holocaust are still keenly felt by many and expressed in postmemory narratives, should surely encourage further exploration. The fact that these complex family histories are part of British identities should also serve as a warning to those who would like to pretend that Britain is radically different from Continental Europe rather than being inextricably intertwined with it in history, memory, and postmemory.

[40] Peter Skyte, 'Who We Are', *Second Generation Voices*, January 2017, 2.